

Message Text

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ACTION EB-07

INFO OCT-01 IO-11 ISO-00 AF-06 ARA-06 EA-07 EUR-12 NEA-10

OIC-02 FEA-01 AGR-05 CEA-01 CIAE-00 COME-00 DODE-00

FRB-03 H-02 INR-07 INT-05 L-03 LAB-04 NSAE-00 NSC-05

PA-01 AID-05 CIEP-01 SS-15 STR-04 ITC-01 TRSE-00

USIA-06 PRS-01 SP-02 OMB-01 /135 W

----- 093424

R 140855Z FEB 76

FM USDEL MTN GENEVA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1145

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H PASS CODEL

PASS STR FOR INFO

PASS AGRICULTURE

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: MTN ETRD

SUBJECT: FEBURARY 16 TROPICAL PRODUCTS MEETING

1. GATT SECRETARIAT CALLED INFORMAL MEETING OF SEVEN DC'S AND SEVEN LDC'S TO DISCUSS WHAT PROGRESS MIGHT BE MADE IN THE TROPICAL PRODUCTS (TP) MEETING BEGINNING FEBURARY 16. GATT DEPUTY DIRECTOR GENERAL MATHUR CHAIRED THE MEETING WHICH FOCUSED ON THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS: WHEN AND IN WHAT FORM OFFERS WERE TO BE TABLED, IF AND TO WHOM OFFERS WILL BE CIRCULATED, AND WHAT NEXT STEPS WERE ENVISAGED AFTER THE TABLING OF OFFERS. HE ENCOURAGED AN EXCHANGE OF THE INITIAL VIEWS OF DELEGATIONS ON THESE ISSUES.

2. US (WALKER), EC, JAPAN, AND CANADA INDICATED THAT THEY WOULD TABLE OFFERS ON MARCH 1. SWITZERLAND INDICATED THAT THEY PROBABLY

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COULD NOT TABLE THEIR OFFERS UNTIL MARCH 15, AND THE AUSTRALIAN

AND NORDIC DELEGATIONS INDICATED THAT PROCEDURES WERE UNDERWAY IN THEIR CAPITALS WITH THE INTENTION OF TABLING OFFERS ON MARCH 1.

3. WITH RESPECT TO FORMAT FOR OFFERS, LDC'S AT THE MEETING (WITH THE EXCEPTION OF ARGENTINA) INDICATED THAT THEY HAD NO STRONG VIEWS. ARGENTINA INDICATED THAT IT WOULD REQUEST THE GATT SECRETARIAT TO CIRCULATE ITS PROPOSED FORMAT WHICH INCLUDED A CURRENT DESCRIPTION OF TARIFF AND NONTARIFF REGIMES ON REQUESTED ITEMS AND THE OFFER A COUNTRY WAS MAKING. WITH RESPECT TO TARIFFS, THE DESCRIPTION OF THE CURRENT REGIME WOULD INCLUDE MFN, GSP, AND SPECIAL PREFERENTIAL RATES. DC'S WHICH SPOKE TO THIS QUESTION INDICATED THEIR INTENTION TO IDENTIFY THE ITEM, THE CURRENT RATE OF DUTY, AND THE OFFER, NOTING THAT NONTARIFF MEASURES WERE NOT SUSCEPTIBLE TO TABULAR FORM.

4. WITH RESPECT TO CIRCULATION, LDC'S (INDIA, JAMAICA, BRAZIL, AND ARGENTINA) ARGUED FOR CIRCULATION OF COMPREHENSIVE OFFERS LISTS TO ALL PARTICIPANTS. THE US SUPPORTED BY AUSTRALIA AND JAPAN, INDICATED THAT IT PREFERRED BILATERAL CIRCULATION OF OFFERS ON THE BASIS OF TRADE INTEREST. IN THIS MANNER, DEVELOPING COUNTRIES WOULD BE INFORMED ON ALL PRODUCTS OF TRADE INTEREST TO THEM WHETHER OR NOT THEY HAD MADE A REQUEST. THE EC MADE NO SPECIFIC SUGGESTION BUT PROPOSED THAT IT WAS SUFFICIENT THAT OFFERING COUNTRIES CIRCULATE THEIR OFFERS IN THE MANNER MOST ACCEPTABLE TO THEM.

5. SINGAPORE NOTED THAT THE IMPORTANT THING WAS THAT OFFERS BE TABLED ON MARCH 1 AND THAT THE QUESTION OF CIRCULATION COULD BE DECIDED AT A LATER DATE. INDIA, WHILE NOTING IT DID NOT UNDERSTAND THE PROBLEMS WITH THE CIRCULATION OF OFFERS TO ALL PARTICIPANTS, AGREED. THE NORDICS THEN PROPOSED A COMPROMISE SOLUTION--THEY ENVISAGED A TWO-STAGE APPROACH. IN THE FIRST STAGE OFFERING COUNTRIES WOULD INDICATE TO ANY COUNTRY WHICH HAD A TRADE INTEREST THOSE PRODUCTS ON WHICH IT WAS MAKING AN OFFER. IN A SECOND STAGE THE OFFERS WOULD BE CIRCULATED TO ALL PARTICIPANTS. THE TIMING OF THE SECOND STAGE LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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AND THE METHOD OF CIRCULATION COULD BE DECIDED IN A LATER MEETING. UNFORTUNATELY, THE NORDICS ELABORATED THEIR VIEW THAT THIS CIRCULATION TO ALL PARTICIPANTS WOULD BE A CONSOLIDATION OF ALL DEVELOPED COUNTRY OFFERS. THE CHAIRMAN SUMMED UP BY INDICATING THAT THERE WAS NO CONSENSUS ON ANY OF THESE PROPOSALS FOR THE CIRCULATION OF OFFERS. HE DID NOTE, HOWEVER, THAT APPARENTLY THERE WAS SOME CONSENSUS THAT THE CIRCULATION OF COMPREHENSIVE OFFER

LISTS TO ALL PARTICIPANTS WOULD BE DONE LATER THAN MARCH 1.

6. WITH RESPECT TO THE WORK OF THE GROUP SUBSEQUENT TO TABLING OFFERS, USDEL INDICATED THAT BILATERAL NEGOTIATIONS WERE NECESSARY, AT WHICH TIME IT WOULD ELUCIDATE ITS OFFER AND THE "OTHER ELEMENTS OF THE NEGOTIATION" (READ LDC CONTRIBUTIONS). THE EC AND OTHER DC'S SUPPORTED THIS VIEW, NOTING THAT THEY WISHED THE OPPORTUNITY TO EXPLAIN THEIR OFFERS. THE INDIAN DELEGATE NOTED THAT HE BELIEVED PLURILATERAL NEGOTIATIONS WERE ALSO NECESSARY.

6. MATHUR CONTINUED TO PRESS MORE EXPLICITLY FOR DELEGATIONS' VIEWS ON ANOTHER MEETING OF THE GROUP. JAMAICA INDICATED THAT IT WOULD BE USEFUL TO WORK TOWARDS A DEADLINE AND PROPOSED, WITH THE SUPPORT OF INDIA, THAT THE GROUP MEET THIS SUMMER SOMETIME BEFORE THE TNC. THERE WAS GENERAL AGREEMENT ON THIS PROPOSAL BUT ARGENTINA NOTED THAT THE POSSIBILITY OF THE CHAIR CALLING AN EARLIER MEETING MIGHT BE IMPORTANT IF THE WORK IN BILATERAL AND PLURILATERAL NEGOTIATIONS WAS NOT PROCEEDING ON A TIMELY BASIS.

8. IT IS NOTEWORTHY THAT LDC'S DID NOT PRESS FOR AN EARLY TPG MEETING, OR EVEN A MEETING BEFORE UNCTAD IV. THEY SEEMED CONTENT WITH THE BILATERAL POSTURE. THIS IS A DESIRABLE DEVELOPMENT FROM OUR VIEWPOINT. WALKER

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: MEETINGS, AGRICULTURAL COMMODITIES, TARIFF NEGOTIATIONS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 14 FEB 1976
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: morefirh
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1976MTNGE01082
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D760057-0519
From: MTN GENEVA
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1976/newtext/t19760247/aaaabpjm.tel
Line Count: 143
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION EB
Original Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: morefirh
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 10 MAY 2004
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <10 MAY 2004 by ifshinsr>; APPROVED <01 JUL 2004 by morefirh>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
04 MAY 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: FEBURARY 16 TROPICAL PRODUCTS MEETING
TAGS: ETRD, MTN
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 04 MAY 2006